

The logo features a large blue star with a red outline on the left. To its right, the word "Corps Connection" is written in a large, bold, blue serif font. Above this, the words "ALABAMA citizen corps" are written in a smaller, blue sans-serif font, with a small red star icon between "citizen" and "corps".

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Alabama Citizen Corps is a program of the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

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An Innovative Approach to Donations Management: AVADS

The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GFBCI) is the lead agency for Support Annex G: Volunteer and Donations Management, under Alabama's Emergency Operations Plan. In times of large scale disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, GFBCI establishes a toll free donations hotline to receive calls from prospective volunteers and donors. Once an offer is received by the hotline the donation is recorded and matched to an organization involved in the relief effort. During Katrina the donations hotline received over 6,800 calls matching 172 donations valued at nearly 1.8 million dollars.

The Alabama Volunteer and Donations System (AVADS) was created to aid in this procedure. Developed by Dr. Tom Marshall and his team from Auburn University, AVADS is a web-based clearinghouse that helps to streamline donations. Working in conjunction with Alabama Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster as well as with the GFBCI, Dr. Marshall and his team have generously donated their time and expertise in creating an innovative program that will assure that the generosity of Alabamians (and the nation at large) will be directed to those in need.

When using AVADS, donors can register information directly into the online system, or if they do not have access to the internet, a hotline phone operator can enter the information for them. AVADS classifies the donations into three categories: type and amount of service or goods, current location, and date of availability. Organizations involved in the disaster relief process will have the ability to log on and view the pledged goods. This allows them to assess their own needs and access the resources directly from a list of available donations. Organizations can then contact the donor personally to schedule transportation for goods or coordinate scheduling for the volunteer. Although AVADS is still undergoing final reviews, its' current capabilities have already developed to the point where AVADS will be a vital tool this upcoming



GFBCI VISTAS Jamey Lowdermilk and Ivonne Garcia take a close look at AVADS.

ing Hurricane Season.

Due to his work on AVADS and other contributions to the State of Alabama, we would like to congratulate Dr. Marshall and his team for being selected to represent Alabama as the winner of the 2006 Southern Growth Policies Board Innovator Award!!!

CERT Member Aids Community in Overcoming Tragic Incident



The following story was contributed by Gary Cosby, Colbert County CERT trainer:

Webster Wade is a Pastor and a Hospice Chaplain. He is also one of my Colbert County CERT members, working in the small, Lauderdale County town of Waterloo.

Webster came by the office yesterday with an inspiring CERT story. He showed me a front page newspaper picture of firemen and in the group is a man wearing a green vest. He proudly said, "That's me," and relayed the following story.

Webster was just finishing his Hospice visit and noticed the volunteer fire department was responding to a nearby location. A man and his wife had lost control of their truck and driven off an embankment into the Tennessee River.



Photo compliment of *TimesDaily*.
(Photographer Matt McKean)

Webster carries his CERT bag and vest in his vehicle, so he put on his CERT vest and ID badge and upon arrival at the scene, asked for the Incident Commander (IC). The IC and the firemen were vaguely familiar with CERT, and they welcomed his help. The IC assigned Webster the job of placing banner tape around the area and providing security.

Webster provided security and direction for media staging, as well as working with the IC in other areas. However, this was not all Webster was able to do. A fisherman had seen the truck go into the water and had diligently tried to free the couple as the truck was sinking into 20-25' of water. He was unable to help them and was very distraught. The IC then called on Webster to assist the fisherman with his traumatic grief. Combining his CERT training with his profession as a Chaplain, Webster was able to comfort and pray with the man, and the firemen gathered around. Also, one of the firefighters became very distraught, and began crying loudly. Again Webster was utilized in helping this person cope with the trauma of the incident.

I think this is a great instance of just how valuable CERT members can be.



Montgomery Police Department Shares VIPS Tips with Tupelo Police Department

Recently, the Tupelo Mississippi Police Department paid a visit to the Montgomery Police Department to gain information and insight on the VIPS program. The Tupelo PD was represented by Deputy Chief Robert Hall, Major Anthony Hill, and Captain Cliff

Hardy. The Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (R.S.V.P.) was represented by Susan Naron Volunteer Center Direction; Kim Crump, Volunteer Coordinator; Reginald Adams Chairman, Lift Inc. (Community Service Agency), and Neil Naron, Community volunteer.

The event included a number of briefings from different staff and volunteers. Cpl. George R. Brooks, along with several volunteers, discussed exactly how each Division utilized the volunteer services in their work and their department. VIPS Members Loveless Johnson and Eddie Edwards briefed the visitors on VIPS vehicle use, including the VIPS Kawasaki (Mule) and the VIPS Patrol vehicles. They also visited Eastdale Mall to observe and interview the Volunteers during the VIPS recruiting drive, soliciting their views on the program.

Major H. C. Forte, Commander of the Community Policing Division, also spoke on the status of the VIPS program. He discussed how much money the program has saved the Police Dept, and how to maintain the volunteers' interests in the program. In the words of Cpl. Brooks, "We hope this will not be the only visit from Tupelo PD, but a lasting partnership between our Departments Volunteer programs."



National Movie Stars from Helena City!

On March 30, a film crew with the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) made a special trip to Alabama in honor of one group: the Helena City Explorers, of the Helena City Police Department. This team



From left: Sergeant Mike Jones, Explorer Chief Cory Jackson, Explorer Captain Bo Savelle, and Adviser Justin Roberts.

of youngsters spent the day under bright lights and bugged with microphones, sharing the success of their program. The DVD, to be completed and distributed this summer, highlights this program for its impressive accomplishments in engaging youth in voluntary police service. You may remember this team from our recent newsletter, which featured the group's achievements since inception in 1998, including their recent win (2004) at the bi-annual National Law Enforcement Conference. They'll defend their title again this July (and we're all behind you!!!).

The Explorer's program, as explained by the Explorer's Commander, Sergeant Mike Jones, was initiated to provide a service opportunity in law enforcement to interested individuals ages 14 – 21. The program also serves as a long-term recruiting tool for the Police Department. Chief of the Helena City Police Department, Douglas Jones further described the improved relationship with the community as a result of the program, including the sense of gratitude, particularly from involved parents. "I love these kids," said Chief Jones, "I watch them grow up in this program. And then, when they come into the Police Department, they already



know what to do.” In his interview for the DVD, Cory Jackson, Chief of the Explorer’s team (age 17), explained that he had served over 20,000 hours in service with the program over his 4 years with the team. Justin Roberts, Associate Advisor to the Explorer’s team, who began serving 5 years ago at 16, described all the training the group receives, including AED and CPR, Search and Rescue procedures, Emergency Response Training, and Drill Team and Iron Guard (for ceremonies). When questioned as to why he began with Explorer’s as teenager, Justin responded, “I was inspired to help.” He is now working towards an officer position within the department. “I’m very proud of them and their caliber of work,” added Chief Jones. Really, we just can’t say it enough: **WELL DONE, EXPLORERS!**



From left: Explorer First Lieutenant Lauren Bolling, Explorer Commander Michael Nelson, and Explorer Adviser Josh Lindsey.



Morgan County Alabama Medical Reserve Corps



Morgan County held an Emergency Preparedness Expo on March 28 at the Hartselle Medical Center in Hartselle. The expo informed community members of the variety of agencies in the county and the services they offer.

In addition, the Expo helped identify community volunteers and informed the public of what they can do in the event of an emergency.

Way to Go Morgan County on a Job Well Done!



VISTA Disaster Response and Recovery Team

The Alabama Governor’s Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GFBCI) currently has six AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) members serving alongside regular staff in the office. Led by Alison Welty, these VISTA volunteers serve on the Disaster Response and Recovery Team.

The team is working on a variety of projects, including but not limited to, setting up an Inter-faith Disaster Network, writing and implementing a ten-year plan to end homelessness, and coordinating volunteers and donations for the state of Alabama.

VISTA of the Month—Annie Mancini

A recent graduate from Washington University in St. Louis, I am originally from Rochester, New York and Boston, Massachusetts. I chose to join this AmeriCorps*VISTA team because in the wake of Katrina, many are left without the basic amenities that so many of us take for granted and I wanted to find a way to actively serve the affected communities. During my year of service, I will be working to build an Interfaith Disaster Network in order to maximize efficiency of resources to meet long-term recovery needs and for future disaster preparedness.



Upcoming Events



KATRINA'S PETS ADOPT-A-THON:



Members of the AmeriCorps Team volunteering with a makeshift animal shelter in Mississippi.

April 22 is National Youth Service Day, and the AmeriCorps Disaster Response and Recovery Team would like to warmly invite you to attend Katrina's Pets Adopt-a-Thon!!! For this one day event, pets displaced by Katrina will be brought all the way to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, from animal shelters in New Orleans. In addition to the Adopt-a-Thon, information regarding disaster preparedness will be disseminated, and both new and current pet owners will have the option of micro chipping their pets to keep them safe. The event will be held in Tuscaloosa, in conjunction with Metro Animal Shelter, at Bowers Park Pine Shelter from 10 am-5 pm. Interested in volunteering or need directions? We're happy to answer any and all questions—please feel free to email us at katrina.adopt@gmail.com.

We hope to see you all there!!!!

FAYETTE COUNTY: Fayette County will hold its next Medical Reserve Corps meeting on April 6th, from 6-8 p.m. at the Alabama Cooperative Extension System Office. This meeting is open to all prospective MRC volunteers. For more information, contact Joan Weaver at (205) 932-8941.

MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS (MRC) NATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND TRAINING CONFERENCE: Join your fellow MRC volunteers for three days of sharing at the Hyatt Regency Dallas Hotel at Reunion in Dallas, Texas. Expert panels, engaging speakers, volunteer management training... DON'T MISS IT, April 18-21, 2006!

FIRST ANNUAL ALVOAD CONFERENCE: Alabama Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster will host its first annual conference *Empowering Local Alliances Active in Disaster* on Tuesday, May 23, 2006 at Auburn University in Montgomery. The conference will feature Andy Miller, Executive Director of NVOAD and Bruce Baughman, Director of Alabama's EMA. See you there! For more information, contact Jamey at jamey.lowdermilk@servealabama.gov

We want to hear from you.

The Alabama Citizen Corps Council is looking for articles, pictures, updates, lessons learned, tips, useful websites and events for this monthly newsletter. Please send any information on Citizen Corps, CERT, Volunteers in Police Service, Neighborhood Watch, Medical Reserve Corps, Fire Corps, or anything else of interest to Citizen Corps Councils to: alison.welty@servealabama.gov. Submissions are due by the 15th of each month to be published in the following month's newsletter, space permitting.

April's Tip of the Month!

Prepare Man's Best Friend for an Emergency.

Dogs may be man's best friend, but due to health regulations, most emergency shelters cannot house animals. Find out in advance how to care for your pets and working animals when disaster strikes. Pets should not be left behind, but could be taken to a veterinary office, family member's home or animal shelter during an emergency. Also be sure to store extra food and water for pets.



For more information, visit the Animal Safety section on www.redcross.org or visit the Humane Society Website at www.hsus.org

It's Never Too Early to Think Ahead...

National Preparedness Month (September) will be here before we know it! Just remember it's never too early to start thinking about the kind of projects you would like to launch in your community to help everyone become more prepared for disasters of all kinds.

Send Us Your Feedback!

Have suggestions or ideas for topics? Please send them to Megan Bayha at megan.bayha@servealabama.gov.